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ABSTRACT

This paper describes research and development activities dealing with a system of individually guided motivation at a Wisconsin elementary school. Four general objectives for the project are stated. These deal with motivation for learning subject matter knowledge and skills, developing independence, assuming increasing self direction, and conceptualizing a value system. There are 17 specific behaviors related to the four general objectives. All students were given a self-assessment sheet to complete. Teachers also rated the children on behavior. Students were then assigned to conference groups. The conferences were non-directive in nature, each child setting his own goal and his progress toward it. Motivational principles used in addition to the goal setting were reinforcement, feedback, and reasoning. At the conclusion of the conferences, each child again rated his own behavior, while the teacher also rated him. Results showed that children really improved in their behavior. Only the individualized conference group showed a significantly higher gain than did the no conference control group. (SJ)

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INDIVIDUALLY GUIDED MOTIVATION:

GOAL-SETTING PROCEDURES TO DEVELOP

STUDENT SELF-DIRECTION AND PROSOCIAL BEHAVIORS

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INDIVIDUALLY GUIDED MOTIVATION: GOAL-SETTING PROCEDURES TO DEVELOP STUDENT SELF-DIRECTION AND PROSOCIAL BEHAVIORS[1]

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The purpose of this paper is to describe research and development activities dealing with a system of individually guided motivation at a Wisconsin Elementary School in Janesville, Wisconsin.[2] The motivational system is an operational component of a larger system of individually guided instruction in which instruction in the curriculum areas is geared to the characteristics and needs of each child. The Wilson Elementary School, other Wisconsin schools, and the Wisconsin Research and Development Center for Cognitive Learning have been engaged in cooperative research and development since 1966. The objective of these continuous cooperative efforts is to develop, evaluate, refine, and put into practice a self-renewing system of elementary school education that provides excellent learning opportunities for each child, advances elementary school teaching as a profession, and encourages effective home-school relationships.

The starting point for a system of individually guided motivation is a clear statement of behaviors that indicate the level and focus of motivation on the part of children. It is developed jointly by consultants, teachers, and children. Variations are made in it from year to year. This statement of behaviors then becomes the objective of the system. A second component of a system of motivation is a statement of principles of

motivation based on theory and research through which the objectives can be reached. This statement of principles is formulated by scholars with lesser input from teachers. Finally, clear descriptions of activities of teachers and students by which the principles can be implemented are needed. These descriptions are developed and tested jointly by the scholars from the Center and teachers. Children also participate in this.

The next section of this paper is devoted to a description of a total system of individually guided motivation that is under development at the Center. Remaining sections then describe the implementation of certain elements of the system at Wilson School.

The System of Individually Guided Motivation

When developing the objectives for a system of motivation, one considers behaviors or actions of students that can be observed and that indicate a desire to learn subject-matter knowledge and skills and prosocial values. The prosocial behaviors necessarily represent a good balance between the development of prosocial values as represented in the school's written or unwritten code of conduct and individual freedom of expression. Such behaviors when properly stated, are the objectives of a school's system of individually guided motivation and can, in turn, be modified and adapted to fit the needs and characteristics of each child and can also be adapted to the various curriculum areas.

In Table 1 are found the objectives of the system of motivation. This statement went through a revision during each of three consecutive years. Each school system will probably need to revise it somewhat before attempting to apply it.

Insert Table 1 about here

The objectives are stated at two levels of generality. Four general objectives are stated that deal with motivation for learning subject-matter knowledge and skills, developing independence from adults in connection with motivation, assuming increasing self-direction in connection with prosocial conduct, and conceptualizing a value system. Seventeen specific behaviors related to the four general objectives are stated. At the next level of specificity, which is not indicated in Table 1, the teacher of say a seven-year-old, after assessing the child's characteristics and behaviors related to motivation, states more precise objectives. For example, "Begins tasks promptly" requires further definition of the tasks and the specific behaviors that are appropriate for a seven-year-old as it applies to reading, art, or some other curriculum area.

Certain of the objectives listed in Table 1, specifically those related to the learning of subject-matter, independence of motivation, and the development of prosocial values formed the basis for the Wilson School motivation project reported in this article. The objectives were reworded and defined by the teachers and students at Wilson to fit their particular circumstances.

The objectives of the system of motivation are attainable as teachers are able to apply various principles of motivation. In the left column of Table 2 are given principles of motivation. These are conclusions drawn

Insert Table 2 about here

mainly from laboratory studies and related theorizing about motivation. In the right column instructional guides are listed that are parallel to the principles. The related research and theory regarding the principles are presented elsewhere.[3] The first four generalizations deal primarily with motivational concerns related to the learning of school subject matter--focusing of attention, using positive motives, goal setting and goal attainment, and providing informative feedback after activities are underway. The next two principles are more directly applicable to student conduct, dealing with the initial learning and strengthening of prosocial behaviors. The last two principles are equally relevant to both learning and conduct.

The principles in Table 2 are stated as internal conditions of the student related to motivation. The instructional guides make explicit the teacher's role in motivation and imply external, or school, conditions that encourage a desirable level of student motivation. This set of principles and guides has undergone two major revisions since 1961 and are now offered as the best available hypotheses to be tested in ongoing school situations.

The procedures reported in this article involved individual and group conferences by which the principles of goal setting, feedback, reasoning, and reinforcement could be implemented. The procedures were developed mainly by the staff of the Wilson School and were tested for their effectiveness by the authors of this article and the school staff. Information was gathered concerning the appropriate group size for conferences at different grade levels, the ability of teachers to conduct group and individual conferences in a nondirective manner, and the effectiveness of procedures whereby students could become self-directive in setting and attaining goals related to motivation.

The Project

Participating Students

The participating students were regularly enrolled in the Wilson Elementary School, Janesville, Wisconsin. Wilson School receives Title III funds, but is not racially mixed. Wilson utilizes a team approach to instruction and thus the children are placed in nongraded Instructional and Research Units instead of grades; however, we shall give the rough grade equivalents, also. Complete data were available for 117 students in Unit I (Kindergarten), 102 students in Unit II (first grade), 88 students in Unit III (second grade), 166 students in Unit IV (third and fourth grades) and 155 students in Unit V (fifth and sixth grades).

Experimental Procedure

Initial Assessments. Before assignment to the different conference groups, all students at Wilson School completed a self-assessment sheet on which they rated themselves as of that date on a set of 20 behaviors. The list of behaviors is found in Table 3. The 20 behaviors on the

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Insert Table 3 about here

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student-assessment sheets were derived primarily from the behaviors listed in Table 1 as the objectives for a system of individually guided motivation; however, the student council of the school under the leadership of the principal generated some of the statements during a two-year period. The rating device was formulated by the Center staff and the school people. Each student rated himself on each behavior on a five-point scale ranging from "almost always doing the job yourself" to "almost always having to be told to do the job." As soon as each student had completed this self-assessment sheet, it was

collected and neither the student nor his teachers had reference to it during the project period. The younger children needed help from a teacher or aide in reading and marking these sheets; however, the adult always wrote down the child's decision without trying to influence him in any way.

Teachers from the unit, a minimum of two teachers in the smaller units and three teachers in the larger units, also evaluated each child on the same 20 behaviors on which the student had evaluated himself. The teachers met together for this evaluation with each teacher first making an independent judgment as to the student's present location along the five-point scale. The ratings of the teachers were then averaged for each behavior (rounded to the nearest half point) to obtain the final value designated for each child on the teacher assessment form. Teacher assessment forms were filed in the central office and were not accessible during the project period.

Assignment of students to conference groups. Within each unit, or team arrangement, all students were randomly assigned in approximately equal numbers to one of four treatment groups: (1) control group which received no conferences; (2) individual conferences; (3) small-group (3-4 students) conferences; or (4) medium-group (6-8 students) conferences. All conferences were held with a teacher from the unit. Each teacher was assigned to student conferences so that each had an approximately equal number of students for individual, small- and medium-group conferences. That is, each teacher had 6-8 students for individual conferences, 6-8 students divided into two small conference groups, and 6-8 students for one medium conference group.

Conference procedure. At the first conference, regardless of the size of the group, each student received an unmarked copy of the student assessment sheet to be used as a goal setting sheet. During the conferences, the students were encouraged by the adult conducting the conference to discuss the behaviors listed and to group similar behaviors. During the discussion the teacher endeavored to get the children to define the meaning of each of the behaviors through the use of examples of everyday instances of the behavior. Each child was then encouraged to pick a behavior or group of similar behaviors that he wanted to improve on between conferences. The child then assessed where he presently ranked on that behavior and set a goal for himself in terms of where he wanted to rate on the behavior for the next conference. At each succeeding conference each child reported on the progress he had made toward his goal. Thus, the goal setting was self-directed. Not only did the children set their own goals but they assessed their own progress in achieving their goals. The adult provided reinforcement for any report of improvement.

Throughout the conferences, the adults attempted insofar as possible to play a nondirective role. The adult accepted the goals of the child and his report of progress. The main job of the adult was to insure through discussion that the children understood what each behavior meant. The adult also tried to help the children realize that behaviors can be related. In conducting the conferences, the adult attempted to accept the children's responses and rework them to get at real problems. The sincerity of a child's response was never overtly doubted. Within the larger groups, the adult attempted to maintain the mood of the group as one of cooperativeness rather than

competitiveness. The children in the group were encouraged to listen to each others ideas and to build each other up rather than to criticize.

The motivational principles used in addition to the goal setting as outlined were reinforcement, feedback, and reasoning.

Reinforcements, including attending closely to the child's comments, praising verbally, smiling, and nodding were administered by the adult whenever a child stated his progress toward his goal or actually demonstrated progress during the conference period. In the group conferences, not only were children directly reinforced but they also observed others being reinforced for stating progress toward their goals.

Feedback was provided periodically by the adult to each child. The adult kept a Conference Comment Card on each child so that progress and problems could be noted. The feedback consisted of confirming the child's comments concerning how he was succeeding in manifesting the behaviors listed on his sheet, and confirming the number of goals he indicated that he had attained.

Reasoning was involved when the adult attempted to elicit from the children the reasons they thought they should exhibit the behaviors. The children discussed with each other and with the adult the consequences of their own behavior for themselves and for others in various situations. In the group conferences, the adult tried to guide the children to a concensus about the relative importance of the behaviors to the individual, to other students, and to the school as a

whole. That is, the adult, in a nondirective fashion, aided the children in verbalizing and conceptualizing the reasons behind their own behavior and why it is important that they should manifest certain prosocial behaviors.

Location and scheduling. The location of conferences varied depending on the size of the conference group. Individual conferences were held in one of the many small rooms or corners of rooms already designated for individual or small-group study in Wilson School. The medium-group conferences were held in a separate room, or in a classroom not occupied during a particular block of time during the day, since 6-8 students could easily disturb other activities in a room.

Conferences in Units II, III, IV and V were held every other week for an eight-week period for a total of four conferences. If a student was absent for a scheduled conference, this conference was re-scheduled for a later time so that each student had an opportunity to participate in four conferences. In Unit I, each child assigned to a conference-treatment group participated in four conferences. However, these conferences were held during consecutive weeks because the teachers felt that children this young needed more frequent reinforcement and feedback.

All conferences at all unit levels were held during regular school hours, not during recess periods, noon hours, or after school. This was possible because Wilson School operates under the multiunit plan which allows for flexible scheduling of teacher as well as pupil time.

The medium and small-group conferences lasted, on the average, 15-20 minutes. The individual conferences were from 7 to 10 minutes in length.

Final assessments. At the end of the experimental period (eight weeks in the upper units and four weeks in Unit I) all students including those in the control group completed another self-assessment sheet identical to the initial one. Each student again rated his current standing on each of the 20 behaviors.

The same teachers, using the same method of evaluation as used initially, again rated each student on the 20 behaviors.

Within one week after the end of the project period, all student and teacher-assessment sheets, student goal-setting sheets and teacher-comment cards were collected. One month after the completion of the project, structured interviews were conducted with the principal and unit leaders at Wilson to obtain their evaluation of the project.

Results

Behavioral Ratings

The quantitative information included the pre- and post-assessments of the 20 behaviors by both students and teachers. The average pre- and post-assessment scores for all units combined as a function of conditions are shown in Figure 1. The ratings for the behaviors were summed for

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Insert Figure 1 about here

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each individual to provide total pre- and post-scores which were then averaged across individuals in each group.

It is apparent from the figure that students rated themselves higher on both pre- and post-assessments than did their teachers. This discrepancy between teachers and students was true for all units. It is also apparent from the figure that gains were made from pre- to post-assessment for both student and teacher ratings.

When the student and teacher ratings were combined to get overall pre- and post-scores for the control and each conference condition, the following statistics were obtained. The average gain (for all units combined) from pre- to post-ratings for the control condition was 16. The average gains for the individual, small-group and medium-group-conference conditions were 21, 16, and 19. Analysis of variance showed that the students in the conference conditions made significantly greater gains than students in the control group. Students receiving individual conferences gained significantly more than students in small or medium groups. The latter two conditions did not differ.

When the analyses of pre-post gain scores was done separately for the student self-ratings and the teacher ratings of the students, significant differences between conference conditions appeared only in the student ratings. For the student ratings taken by themselves, the individual-conference condition was superior to the control, small, and medium group conferences which did not differ from one another. The average gains in the teacher assessments showed the same pattern as the student ratings but no significant differences were obtained.

Although not reported in a figure or table, it was found that the units differed in the amount of gain in pre- to post-rating scores. Unit I showed the largest gain. However, the same differences among conference conditions was true for each unit. That is, in each unit the conference groups were better than the control (no-conference), and the individual conferences produced more gain than the small or medium groups.

As noted previously, the students consistently rated themselves higher than they were rated by the teachers; this was true in each

unit. In general, the teacher ratings seemed to change more from pre to post than did the student ratings. The average change from pre- to post-assessment for the teachers was about 12. The average change in student ratings was about 6.

Teacher Comments

Part of the evaluation of the conference procedures was based on the comments of the principal and unit leaders in a series of interviews in which they were asked these questions:

1. What was the overall effect of the conferences in your unit? Or in your school?
2. Can you give examples that illustrate the effect of the conferences?
3. Did group size and/or group composition appear to be a factor in the effectiveness of the conferences?
4. Was the non-directive approach successful with your age level?
5. Other comments on the project?

A summary based on the comments from the Unit V (5th and 6th grades) leader is presented as typical of the teachers' responses to the question.

Overall effect. Children really improved in their behaviors. This was especially noticeable among sixth graders since teachers are usually busy keeping the "lid on" in the spring. But with the conferences, sixth graders responded and kept up their academic work right to the last day of school, and discipline was no problem. Teachers felt that conferences gave the children individual attention. Especially noticeable changes were seen in the "tomboy-type" girls who responded enthusiastically and took on leadership qualities.

Teachers felt that children with a poor self-image gained the most from the conferences. Participation in the conferences seemed to carry over into participation in other school activities. Although the project period was too short to observe much carry-over into academic work, Learning Center activities had less disturbance, less "goofing off" and more self-direction. The Learning Center was used for purposeful academic work rather than as a place to meet friends.

Group size and conditions. Teachers in Unit V preferred the medium size group of 6-8 students from the standpoint of economy of time and lively group interaction. (Teachers in primary units expressed a preference for individual and small-group conferences.) However, teachers also felt that individual conferences might be more effective with certain types of children. The teachers felt that children in the control group became caught up in the general spirit of the project. Leadership emerged in groups as the conference proceeded.

Non-directive approach. All the teachers in Unit V were very enthusiastic about this kind of approach for this age level. It encouraged the idea of working together toward "more of a family situation . . . talking freely about behaviors." Two of the six teachers in this unit had previous training and experience at this type of approach, and others felt they would gain from more training in the technique. The typical comment from other unit leaders was that the non-directive approach was valuable, but teachers needed more training in it.

In his comments about the project, the principal felt that it was highly successful not only for the students but for the teachers. Teachers "became catalysts in bringing about a reaction a positive way." Instead of looking at behaviors in a destructive framework,

which is all too common, they developed a positive strategy for calling the child's attention to goals.

The principal felt that the conferences were most effective with the older children and most noticeable changes in behaviors occurred with children in the upper grades. The known "troublemakers" became less frequent visitors to his office.

The principal pointed out that the 20 behaviors included two general types of behaviors: (1) those that indicate what the teacher expects the child to do like "listening to the teachers" and "picking up after completing a project"; and (2) self-directed concepts like "reading in spare time" and "continuing to work after making mistakes." As teachers worked with children on these behaviors, they realized that if they expect children to listen, they must have something worthwhile to say. And they realized too that if you expect a child to follow directions, you must be sure the directions are clear.

This mutual recognition of the responsibilities of both child and teacher for behavior become essentially a self-directive approach to education for both. This led to a better atmosphere throughout the whole school.

Discussion

The most important finding was that students made large gains on behavioral ratings. The fact that teacher as well as student ratings showed the same direction of change from pre- to post-assessment lends validity to the notion that the ratings reflected actual changes in prosocial behaviors and self-direction on the part of students. Moreover, the observations of the children by teachers during the project

period, reflected in the teacher comments, support the conclusion that the conferences had a real effect on the children's behavior.

A second important finding is that only the individual-conference group showed a significantly higher gain than the no-conference control group, although the mean gain of the medium-conference group was also actually higher (19) than the no-conference group (16). A tentative conclusion might be that the individual conferences were effective while the group conferences were not. Several factors mitigate this conclusion. First, almost all teachers noted the "spill-over" from the conference to the control groups. That is, the enthusiasm generated by the conferences in the teachers and students alike spread to the control students, who were in the same school activities as the conference groups, and motivated them to improve on their school behavior. This, of course, would tend to lessen differences between the conference and control groups. A second factor to be considered is the brevity of the project. Students received only four conferences during the entire project. Most teachers commented that they felt more time was needed. Presumably more time would result in greater differences between conference and control conditions. Also, some teachers reported difficulty with a non-directive approach. Presumably some time early in the project period was spent by teachers in adapting themselves to this role. Thus, the conferences may not have been totally effective from the beginning. This would seem to be a particular disadvantage for the group-conference conditions since a non-directive approach in a group is probably harder to manage than in a one-to-one situation.

A third important outcome was the enthusiasm for the project reflected in the comments of the teachers, unit leaders, and principal. The

comments indicated that the staff felt the conferences were accomplishing the objective of encouraging self-direction on the part of students. The principal considered the greatest effect of the project to be in changing the focus of the teachers' thinking about student conduct. Instead of attending largely to instances of misconduct on the part of students, teachers were encouraged to focus on instances of positive behavior. The fact that the teacher ratings showed the greater shifts during the project period supports his observation.

In conclusion, further refinement and evaluation of the use of individual and group conferences utilizing the non-directive approach with goal setting seems to be warranted. Sufficient information has been provided in this article that the staff of a school building might wish to proceed in this direction on their own. More detailed printed information about procedures is available from the Wisconsin R & D Center.

Footnotes

1. This research was done at the Wisconsin Research and Development Center for Cognitive Learning which is supported by grants from the United States Office of Education, Department of Health, Education and Welfare, under the provisions of the Cooperative Research Program (Center No. C-03, Contract OE 5-10-154).
2. The authors wish to acknowledge the substantial contribution of Norman Graper, the principal of Wilson School, to conceptualizing and carrying out this project. He and other members of his staff wrote a detailed plan for individually guided motivation in his school, including the use of conferences, in the summer of 1968 in a workshop conducted by the first author. Recognition is also due Connie Glowacki, Helen Johns, Ester Olson, Norma Smith, and Thomas Delamater, unit leaders at Wilson Elementary School.
3. The heuristic and theory discussed here were first formulated by H. J. Klausmeier in Learning and Human Abilities: Educational Psychology, 1st ed., 1961; Table 2 is adapted from the 3rd edition, in press.

Table 1

Behaviors Indicative of Motivation

A. The student starts promptly and completes self-, teacher-, or group-assigned tasks that together comprise the minimum requirements related to various curriculum areas.

1. Attends to the teacher and other situational elements when attention is required.
2. Begins tasks promptly.
3. Seeks feedback concerning performance on tasks.
4. Returns to tasks voluntarily after interruption or initial lack of progress.
5. Persists at tasks until completed.

B. The student assumes responsibility for learning more than the minimum requirements without teacher guidance during school hours and outside school hours. In addition to behaviors 1-5, the student

6. Continues working when the teacher leaves the room.
7. Does additional work during school hours.
8. Works on school related activities outside school hours.
9. Identifies activities that are relevant for class projects.
10. Seeks suggestions for going beyond minimum amount or quality of work.

C. The student becomes self-directive in connection with use of property, relations with other students, and relations with adults.

11. Moves quietly within and about the school building during quiet periods and activities.
12. Interacts harmoniously with other students.
13. Interacts harmoniously with the teacher and other adults.
14. Conserves own and other's property.
15. Tells other students to behave in accordance with school policies.

D. The student verbalizes a value system consistent with the preceding behaviors.

16. When asked, gives examples of his own actions illustrative of behaviors 1-15.
17. When asked, gives reasons for manifesting behaviors 1-15.

Principles of Motivation and Corollary Instructional Guides

Principle	Instructional Guide
1. Attending to a learning task is essential for initiating a learning sequence.	A. Focus student attention on desired objectives.
2. Desiring to achieve control over elements of the environment and to experience success are essential to realistic goal setting.	B. Utilize the individual's need to achieve and other positive motives.
3. Setting and attaining goals require learning tasks at an appropriate difficulty level; feelings of success on current learning tasks heighten motivation for subsequent tasks; feelings of failure lower motivation for subsequent tasks.	C. Help each student set and attain goals related to the school's educational program.
4. Acquiring information concerning correct or appropriate behaviors and correcting errors are associated with better performance on and more favorable attitudes toward the learning tasks.	D. Provide for informative feedback.
5. Observing and imitating a model facilitates the initial acquisition of prosocial behaviors such as self-control, self-reliance, and persistence.	E. Provide for real-life and symbolic models.
6. Verbalizing prosocial values and behaviors and reasoning about them provide a conceptual basis for the development of the behaviors.	F. Provide for verbalization and discussion of prosocial values.
7. Expecting to receive a reward for specified behavior or achievement directs and sustains attention and effort toward manifesting the behavior or achievement. Nonreinforcement after a response tends to extinguish the response. Expecting to receive punishment for manifesting undesired behavior may lead to suppression of the behavior, to avoidance or dislike of the situation, or to avoidance and dislike of the punisher.	G. Develop and use a system of rewards as necessary to secure sustained effort and desired conduct. Use punishment as necessary to suppress misconduct.
8. Experiencing high stress and anxiety are associated with low performance, erratic conduct, and personality disorders.	H. Avoid the use of procedures that create temporary high stress or chronic anxiety.

Sorenson

Student Self-Assessment Checklist

Name _____ Sex _____ Age _____ Date _____

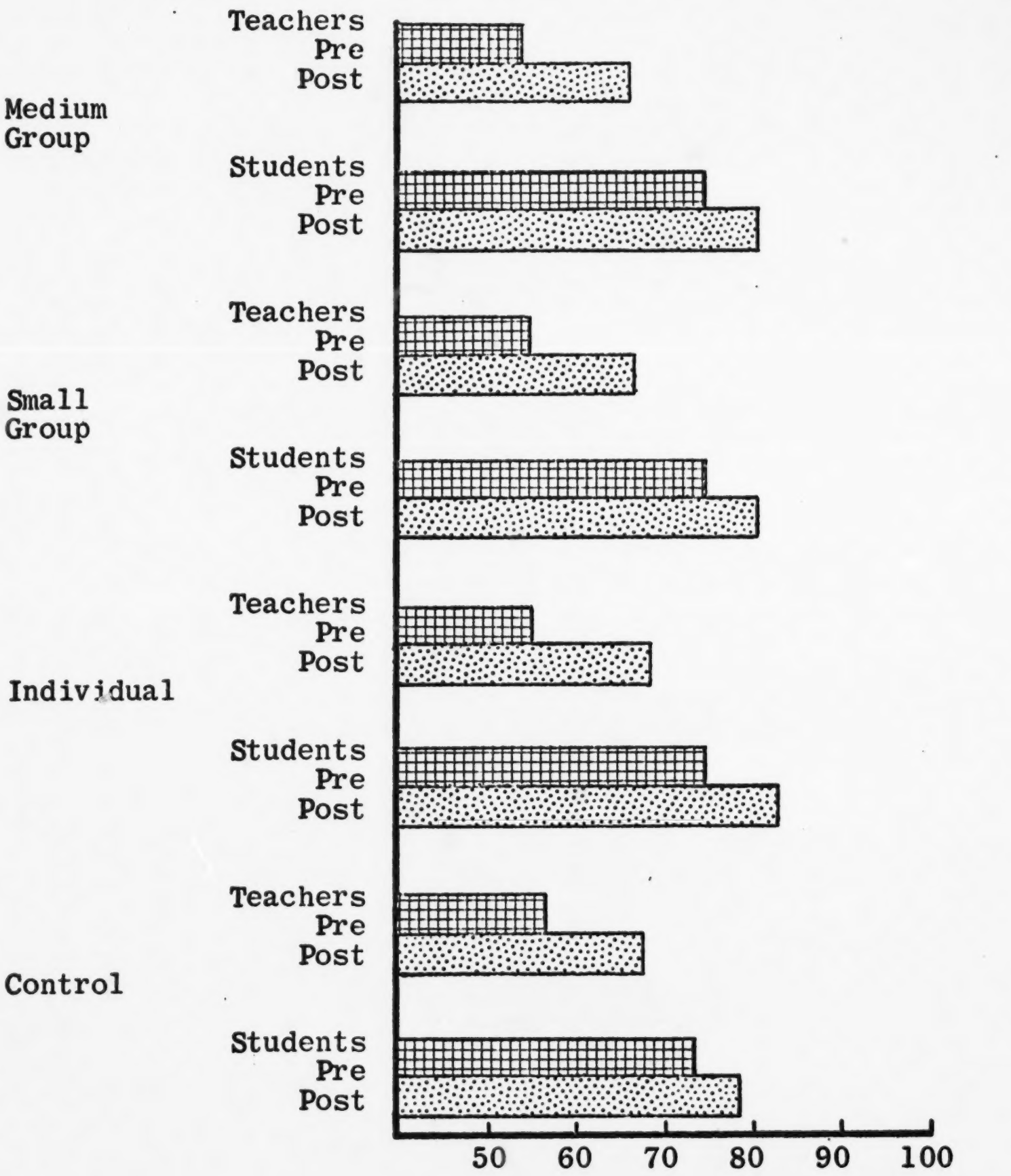
Directions:

Put an X under column 1 if you almost always have to be told to do the job.
Put an X under column 2 if you usually have to be told to do the job.
Put an X under column 3 if you sometimes do the job yourself and sometime have to be told to do it.
Put an X under column 4 if you usually do the job yourself.
Put an X under column 5 if you almost always do the job youself.

	1	2	3	4	5
1. I listen to the teacher.					
2. I begin schoolwork right away.					
3. I correct mistakes.					
4. I work until the job is finished.					
5. I work when the teacher has left the room.					
6. If I make mistakes, I still keep working.					
7. I work on learning activities in free time.					
8. I get to class on time.					
9. I do extra schoolwork.					
10. I do my share in class projects.					
11. I read during free time.					
12. I ask questions about schoolwork.					
13. I have pencil, paper and books ready when they are needed.					
14. I move quietly to and from my classes.					
15. I listen to the ideas of others.					
16. I help my classmates.					
17. I pick up when the work is finished.					
18. I take care of my clothing, books, and other things.					
19. I take care of the school's books, desks, and other things.					
20. I follow directions.					

Figure Caption

Figure 1 Mean Pre- and Post-Ratings for Students and Teachers by Conditions.


Teachers
Pre
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Medium Group
Students
Pre
Post
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Small Group
Students
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Individual
Students
Pre
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Teachers
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Control
Students
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50
60
70
80
90
100
Total Rating Score for 20 Behaviors Combined (Maximum Score = 100)